

WIC Shopping Experience – Talking Points

Area: Produce Aisle

Activity 1: Why do some fruits and vegetables say they are not a WIC item?

What is happening?

Packaged produce, like berries or grapes, rotate frequently at stores. To simplify the process of adding these to the WIC system, many large chain stores use their own system. The WICShopper App barcode scanner may say produce isn't WIC-approved if you scan the barcode on packages or the stickers on individual fruits or vegetables. However, it should go through at the register if it is an allowable food.

Talking points with participants:

- Fresh produce often scans wrong in the app, but almost all fresh produce is an allowable food.
- Bring fresh produce to the register and try to buy it.
- Check your mid-transaction receipt before you finalize your purchase to make sure your benefits are used for the item.
- If it doesn't go through at the register, report it using the "I couldn't buy this" feature on the app.

Area: Dairy Case

Activity 2: Is the WIC-approved food in my benefit package?

What is happening?

The WICShopper App barcode scanner uses the APL along with the participant's benefit information to provide more accurate information. The WICShopper app keeps track of whether an item is WIC-approved, as well as a participant's monthly benefits package and balance. In this case, the whole milk is WIC-approved but isn't a monthly benefit for the benefit package.

Talking points with participants:

- WIC-approved foods in the Oregon WIC Food List may not be a part of your benefit package.
- The printed WIC Benefits List will show you what you receive each month.
- The bottom of your most recent receipt and the customer service line printed on your eWIC card will give you your remaining benefits.
- The “My Benefits” tab on the WICShopper app will show you both your monthly benefits and your remaining balance.

Area: Cereal Section

Activity 3: How can the calculators help me with my shopping?

What is happening?

Calculators know if the item is eligible for its category and keeps a running tally. The scanner feature in the calculator function will always let you know if an item is a WIC-approved food but will only add items to the calculator for its category. In this case, oats in a tub, bag, or box are considered a Whole Grain while instant oatmeal packets are considered a Cereal. So the items were added to the correct food category calculator and deducted from that benefit amount.

Talking points with participants:

- The calculator keeps track of what’s left in your benefits and lets you know if adding an item will bring you over that amount.
- It also keeps track of which food category an item is from and adds it to the right calculator.

Area: Frozen Foods Aisle

Activity 4: What do I do if a food looks like it should be WIC-approved, but is showing up as not approved?

What is happening?

Some food companies submit new items for approval, while others don't. State staff may only learn about a new WIC-eligible product when a participant finds the item while shopping and lets us know through the "I couldn't buy this" feature in the WICShopper app. Sometimes participants discuss these items at clinic visits and local staff to forward information to the state through the data system or by email.

In this case, these are new items for this product line and will need to be added to the APL so participants can use their benefits to purchase them.

Talking points for participants:

- You can use the "I couldn't buy this?" button in the WICShopper app to let us know if you feel something should be WIC-approved.
- You can also let us know here at the clinic about an item so we can send the information along to see if the item can be added to the WIC-approved list.

Area: Peanut and Nut Butter Section

Activity 5: Why does the scanner sometimes tell me different things when I scan different codes on the same label?

What is happening?

The WICShopper App barcode scanner is designed to read many different types of scanned information. This includes traditional barcodes, QR codes, and the shorter barcodes from produce stickers. It will read the first scanned image it finds, not the one that is specific to the WIC Food List. This means depending on what part of the label is scanned, the WIC-approved item may scan as not approved.

Talking points for participants:

- The scanner may try to scan codes other than the barcode.
- Try to make sure only the barcode is showing up on your phone screen when you scan an item.
- You may need to cover other types of codes on the label to get the scanner to read your item's barcode.

Food for thought

How can your experiences from this activity be added to Shopping Education during certifications to help WIC participants have an easier time at the store?